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R 120924Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASMARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0064
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0122
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEPADJ/CJTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ
RHMFISI/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHRMDAB/COMUSNAVCENT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000592

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/11/2018
TAGS: PREL PGOV PINS SU ER
SUBJECT: SLM/UNITY OFFICIAL ON DARFUR DYNAMICS

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4(d).

¶1. (C) DARFUR FRACTIONALIZATION: Darfur rebel leader Sharif Harir, SLM/Unity's chief of Foreign Relations, claims his organization has surpassed JEM in terms of size and clout to become the largest of the many Darfuri rebel groups. Meeting with Emboffs at the Peacebuilding Center for the Horn of Africa on December 11, Harir provided his views on current Darfuri and Sudanese political dynamics. Harir contended that the Darfur opposition is highly fractionalized due to blatant careerism among aspiring leaders, not to policy differences. He said his cousin Minni Minawi, for example, would not give up his "comfortable seat and nice suits" for an opportunity to unite the Darfuri groups. Harir said with a chuckle, "we lack the imagination to think up new names and don't want a rival to have a clear claim on an existing organization, so we just add a slash and a factional name, such as SLM/Free Will; some of these factions are only one person."

¶2. (C) SKEPTICAL ON QATAR: When asked about the Qatari initiative, Harir said he and others in SLM/Unity remain skeptical and had not been approached by Qatar or the Arab League. "What does Qatar know about Darfur?" he mused. Harir said Qatar has focused its attention on JEM due to JEM's ties to Hassan al-Turabi, who Harir claimed has connections with influential Islamic scholars in Qatar. Harir opined that JEM reached its high-water mark with the May raid on Omdurman and has since been eclipsed by SLM/Unity in terms of military capability.

¶3. (SBU) BACKGROUND ON DR. HARIR: Dr. Harir is in Asmara for approximately two weeks visiting old colleagues. His wife and three children reside in Oslo. He recently spent a considerable amount of time in Darfur (November 2007- March 2008) and has plans to return to work on SLM's political reorganization after his time in Asmara. Harir spoke knowledgeably of Darfur history and politics. Harir, a former professor of anthropology, left Sudan in 1991 to found the Democratic Solidarity for Justice and Equality, the largely Zegawa-based political party. Worried about the ineffectiveness of a party with limited ethnic scope, Harir left the DSJE in 1994 to form the multi-ethnic Sudan Democratic Federal Alliance with former governor of Darfur, Ahmed Dere. The SDFA eventually evolved into today's Sudan Liberation Movement.

MCMULLEN